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MACKEYE
GEORGE WASHINGTON AT
THE DELAWARE



GEORGE WASHINGTON AT THE DELAWARE

A Dramatic Action

BY

PERCY MACKAYE

SCENE DESIGN BY ROBERT EDMOND JONES

NOTE ON PRODUCTION BY WALTER HAMPDEN

NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
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STRAND

GEORGE WASHINGTON
AT THE DELAWARE

WORKS BY PERCY MACKAYE

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THE DELAWARE

GEORGE WASHINGTON

AT THE DELAWARE

A Dramatic Action

With a Prologue

BY

PERCY MACKAYE

SCENE DESIGN BY ROBERT EDMOND JONES

TOGETHER WITH
COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS IN REGARD TO
ITS PRODUCTION, BY THE AUTHOR, THE
SCENE DESIGNER, AND

WALTER HAMPDEN

FIRST IMPERSONATOR OF THE TITLE-ROLE OF THE
THREE-ACT PLAY, FROM WHICH THIS
ACTION IS SELECTED, ENTITLED

WASHINGTON,
THE MAN WHO MADE US

A BALLAD PLAY BY PERCY MACKAYE

NEW YORK
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PERCY MACKAYE

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PREFACE

The Dramatic Action here printed is a brief excerpt only of my complete Ballad Play, in three acts and a prologue, "Washington: The Man Who Made Us," published by Alfred A. Knopf, 220 West 42nd St., New York; and this excerpt comprises one Action (the Ninth) selected from the fourteen Actions contained in the three-act play. A note to this effect should be printed, at the head of the Cast of Characters, in all amateur performances given of this Action; and the author requests that two copies of the program be sent, with press notices, to him at his address, Harvard Club, New York City.

At the present date, translations of this Action and other Actions of the play are being done into various languages for use in foreign language publications and theatres of the United States, concerning which those interested in further information may apply to Mr. Barrett H. Clark, Foreign Language Information Service Bureau, Red Cross, 1107 Broadway, New York.

On Washington's Birthday, 1920, the first performance of my complete play, in its Theatre Version, was given by Mr. Walter Hampden and his company at the Belasco Theatre, Washington, D. C., the play opening in New York on March 1st for a run at the Lyric Theatre, with the scenic production of Mr. Robert Edmond Jones.

By the public in many parts of America Mr. Hampden's distinguished acting in the title rôles of "The Servant in the House," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and as Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice," has been welcomed as comparable to the noblest traditions of his profession; and the abounding gifts of Mr. Jones as a creative artist of the theatre have been notably recognized in his scenic productions of "Redemption," "The Jest," "Caliban," "The Birthday of the Infanta," etc.

With a view to assisting the simplification of amateur productions of this Action of my play, both of these

artists associated with its professional production have written their Comments and Suggestions with my own, printed on the pages immediately following the dramatic context.

The music and words of the ballad introductory to this Action ("The Raggle Taggle Gypsies"), as well as the ballads with music included in the complete three-act Ballad-play, may be obtained from the H. W. Gray Company, publishers of music, 2 West 45th St., New York—the ballad of this Ninth Action being illustrated by Dorothy Fuller (of the Fuller Sisters), the other ballads by Arvia MacKaye.

My complete play, "Washington," from which this Action is taken, I began to write at Washington, D. C., in December, 1917, and completed at Shirley Centre, Massachusetts, on July 4th, 1918. Though it had long been partially projected in my mind, yet the human meanings illumined by our entrance into the Great War, and the world relationships implied by that vast decision, were compelling incentives for me to undertake and bring the play to completion, setting during that time all other matters aside.

To-day, George Washington—dead—is for most people a figure remote, statuesque, dignified, cold, almost mythical; one to be revered, but not warmly loved. But in his own day—alive—he was a magnetic human being, passionate, patient, resourceful—a rugged personality, lovable and greatly beloved.

It has been, then, my aim so to portray him in his strong prime, with truth to reality, that we of America to-day may be led to feel a more intimate affection for "the man who made us," and for the still contemporary cause which he espoused for mankind.

PERCY MACKAYE.

*Harvard Club,
27 West 44th St., New York;
July, 1920.*

CHARACTERS

OF THE PROLOGUE

VOICES OF THE PEOPLE (chanting, unseen, or vaguely suggested)

A TOWN CRIER (Quilloquon)

A BALLAD SINGER (Quilloquon)

A LITTLE BOY

A LITTLE GIRL

OF THE DRAMATIC ACTION

THOMAS PAINE

LIEUT. JAMES MONROE

GEN. GEORGE WASHINGTON

COL. ALEXANDER HAMILTON

The sound of a flute (Quilloquon's)

Voices of men (outside)

[For the costuming of these characters of the Prologue and Action, and for the lighting of the scene, see the Comments and Suggestions at the back of this volume.]

PLACE AND TIME: *By the Delaware River, above Trenton; Christmas Night, 1776.*

SCENE: *An Opening amid snow-laden Woods by Moonlight.*

GEORGE WASHINGTON

AT THE DELAWARE

A Dramatic Action



EXITVS · ACTA · PROBATI

PROLOGUE

(PARTS I AND 2)

The stage is shut off from the audience by simple blue curtains, closed where they meet at the centre. Behind the curtains a far-off bell is heard ringing, with musical cadence. Now its tone changes to a deep, mellow pealing; and now its rhythmic cadence is blended with far-sounding chimes, through which low murmurous VOICES of many people rise, fall and rise again more loud—like a great wind, heard distantly, over forest trees. At first hardly audible, the deep murmur grows gradually more articulate, till—between the pulsing

chimes—occasional words and phrases emerge distinguishable, above this flowing utterance of the chanting VOICES:

THE VOICES

‘When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another,—

‘And to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them,—

‘A decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.’

[As the murmurous Chant lessens to a lull, there is heard a single Voice intoning “Oyez!” and the blue curtains are seen to have parted slightly at the centre, discovering—against a background of dark—the Figure of a Town Crier, holding in his left hand a staff to which is attached a lantern, and of which the heraldic top is a hatchet-blade.]

THE CRIER holds near the lantern in his right hand a paper broadside, from which—after calling his Preamble—he reads aloud, intoning with the voice of QUILLOQUON:]

THE CRIER

[QUILLOQUON]

Oyez! Oyez! People of America, hear ye!

This day, in the town hall of Philadelphia, duly convened,—this day in the year of our Lord, One Thousand, Seven Hundred and Seventy-Six,—being the Fourth day of July—forevermore, unto all peoples, declareth the Assembly of our people :

‘We hold these truths to be self-evident:—that all men are created equal,—that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,—that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,—that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

‘That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it.

‘And when a long train of abuses evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism,—it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such Government,—and to provide new Guards for their future security.

‘Such has been the patient suffrance of these Colonies.

‘Our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury.—A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.—

‘We, therefore, The Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled,

—appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions,—do, in the Name, and by the authority of the good People of these Colonies,—solemnly Publish and Declare,

‘That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be,—Free and Independent States!

‘And for the support of this Declaration, we mutually pledge to each other—our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honour.’

[As the TOWN CRIER concludes, a BOY and a GIRL run in from either side, raising their hands toward the paper broadsides, from one of several copies of which he has been reading.

Handing to each a copy, he raises his lantern-staff, and as they run off, right, he follows, calling aloud:]

Oyez! Oyez! People of the Ages,—hear ye!

(Part 3)

In the distance, THE CRIER’S repeated call of “Oyez!” is dying away on the right, when on the left a fiddle begins to play the melody of a ballad-tune¹ during which the visible dim space becomes palely luminous with a swirling greyness, as of snowflakes beginning to fall.

¹ The melody of ‘Raggle-Taggle Gypsies.’

And now—the fiddle having ceased—to a thrumming of the same tune upon strings, three tattered greyish forms enter from the left: the two Children and a Man, who is playing a dulcimer. All three—recognizable once more as THE BOY, THE GIRL and QUILLOQUON—come singing the ballad-tune words, which they act out in their pantomime, severally assuming the parts, in simple ballad fashion, of the characters their song refers to—Lord, Lady, Servants and Gypsies.

THE THREE FIGURES

[QUILLOQUON AND THE CHILDREN]

‘There were three gypsies a-come to my door,
And down-stairs ran this a-lady, O!
One sang high and the other sang low,
And the other sang *Bonny, bonny Biscay O!*

[THE GIRL]

‘Then she pulled off her silk-finished gown
And put on hose of leather, O!

[THE BOY AND QUILLOQUON]

‘The ragged, ragged rags about our door—
She’s gone with the raggle-taggle gypsies, O!
[THE LITTLE GIRL *runs off right.*]

[THE BOY]

‘‘Twas late last night when my lord came home,
Inquiring for his a-lady, O.

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The servants said on every hand:

She's gone with the raggle-taggle gypsies, O!

[QUILLOQUON *turns and addresses* THE BOY.]

[QUILLOQUON]

'Come, saddle to me my milk-white steed,

And go and fetch my pony, O!

That I may ride and seek my bride,

Who is gone with the raggle-taggle gypsies, O!

[*The two run off, right.*

THE LITTLE GIRL *alone enters immediately, left, followed—to the thrumming of the dulcimer—by* THE BOY, *who remains near his place of entrance and sings.*

While he does so, QUILLOQUON enters, passes him, and advances toward THE GIRL, *looking about, seeming at first not to see her.]*

[THE BOY]

'Then he rode high, and he rode low,

He rode through wood and copses, too,

Until he came to an open field,

And there he espied his a-lady, O!

[QUILLOQUON, *approaching* THE GIRL, *with aspect of lordly severity.*]

'What makes you leave your house and land?

What makes you leave your money, O!

What makes you leave your new-wedded lord,
To go with the raggle-taggle gypsies, O!

[THE GIRL]

'O, what care I for my house and land?

What care I for my money, O?

What care I for my new-wedded lord?

I'm off with the raggle-taggle gypsies, O!

[The falling snowflakes grow thicker and the scene more dim.]

[QUILLOQUON]

'Last night you slept on a goose-feather bed,

With the sheet turned down so bravely, O!

But to-night you'll sleep in a cold open field,

Along with the raggle-taggle gypsies, O!

[THE GIRL]

'O, what care I for a goose-feather bed,

With the sheet turned down so bravely, O!

For to-night I shall sleep in a cold open field—

Along with the raggle-taggle gypsies, O!

[With a swift, proud gesture of departure, lifting her last song-note to its octave higher, the little GIRL goes off, right, with steps of gladness, while QUILLOQUON—in crestfallen grandeur—strides off with the BOY, left.]

The GIRL's voice, however, has hardly ceased, and QUILLOQUON has not yet disappeared, when

8 *GEORGE WASHINGTON*

*a Man's Voice is heard singing through the dim
whirling snowfall:]*

THE MAN'S VOICE

[Sings huskily.]

'O, what care I for a goose-feather bed,
With the sheet turned down so bravely, O!
For to-night—I shall sleep in a cold open field
Along with the rattle-taggle gypsies, O!

*[Then suddenly the VOICE speaks, with sharp
staccato.]*

Who goes there?

THE ACTION

*The Man's Voice breaks in a raspy fit of coughing.
While he has sung, the blue curtains have drawn back
to the width of the full stage-aperture, revealing
the Singer himself—a Sentinel, in ragged American
uniform, standing in the night near a low-
burning camp-fire (left).*

*The snow has ceased falling. The fire dimly lights by
its gleam a space surrounded by vaguely dis-
cerned walls of snow-laden woods, except in the
background. There—between trunks of trees,
rising like columns of grey ice—an arch-like*

opening gives glimpses of struggling moonlight and gusty, grey-black darkness, through which a low, muffled thudding and crackling murmur rises occasionally to the ear.

Holding for a moment his musket poised, the Sentinel looks off (left), listening. Then, lowering his gun and turning to the fire, he crouches by it, blows his fingers, takes from within his tattered coat a little book, holds it open near the firelight and begins writing in it.

While he does so, through the glooming aperture in the background, the tall, silhouetted form of WASHINGTON, in long military cloak, his hands gripped behind him, is seen to pace slowly past and disappear (right).

The SENTINEL stops writing, gesticulates to himself, muttering; then reads aloud from his book.

THE SENTINEL

'O ye, that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the Old World is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. O, receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind!'

[Coughing slightly, he stares a moment in the fire: then writes again.

In the background, the dim form of WASH-

INGTON, *returning, paces past and disappears, left.*

Half rising now from his crouched posture, the SENTINEL reads again from his book in the firelight, with gesture as of ardent conversation with another.]

'To see it in our power to make a world happy, to teach mankind the art of being so, to exhibit on the theatre of the universe a character hitherto unknown, and to have, as it were, a new creation entrusted to our hands,—are honours that command reflection.'

[Closing his book, he looks intently in the night. Then suddenly, dropping the book, he seizes up his gun, leaps to his feet and calls out:]

Who goes there?

A MAN'S VOICE

[Answers from outside, left.]

Merry Christmas!

THE SENTINEL

Merry Christmas, yourself!

[A MAN limps wearily in, through a gap in the snow-covered evergreens. The firelight reveals him also forlornly clad in ragged regimentals. The SENTINEL half lowers his gun.]

What's your name, and allegiance?

THE MAN

Lieutenant James Monroe, of the United States.

THE SENTINEL

[Saluting—a bit slouchily, like a civilian.]

'Which are, and of right ought to be, free and independent!' Pass, Lieutenant Monroe, in the name of our immortal Declaration.

MONROE

Immortal, Sir, let us hope, but *ought to be* isn't *are* by a long shot—whatever Mr. Jefferson hath immortally declared for us.

[Sitting on a rock by the fire, he examines his foot.]

THE SENTINEL

[Bending over him.]

Lord, lieutenant, your foot's bloody—bleeding bad! Here, wait a minute.

[Tearing a strip from his own regimentals, he kneels down beside MONROE.]

You need bandaging.

MONROE

Thanks, friend. We all do—in this uniform.

[Behind them the shadowy form of WASHINGTON paces past again, and noiselessly disappears.]

While the SENTINEL is stooping over, wrapping his companion's foot in bandages, MON-

ROE's hand—resting on the book—raises it.
Glancing curiously at the open page, he mutters:]

Hello, what's here?

[The SENTINEL looks up an instant, but goes on immediately with his occupation. MONROE reads aloud:]

'These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered.'

[Turning to the front of the book, he looks closely and reads:]

"Tom Paine: His Note Book."—Great Cæsar!
Where did this come from?

THE SENTINEL

From a hater of Cæsar—out of my breast pocket, Sir.

MONROE

Yours! *You*—Thomas Paine, the author of "Commonsense"?

PAINE

Unauthorized by His Majesty: that's me.

MONROE

[Rising and saluting.]

Why, Sir, permit me to salute—the Revolution!
'Tis a privilege to meet Public Opinion face to face.

PAINE

You meet just a sentinel at his post, Sir. 'Tis a privilege of serving Liberty, to inquire: "Who goes there?"

MONROE

Your inquiry will burn the ears of kings till their doomsday, Mr. Paine. Your challenge rings over the Atlantic. For my part, I should like to see it made the Atlantic doctrine—No passing for Old World tyrants this side of the world!

PAINE

And why not doctrine for t'other side, too, Mr. Monroe?

MONROE

[Sitting again.]

Well, Sir,—a touch of modesty. I administer my doctrine by the dose—half a world at a time.

PAINE

Not me, lieutenant. My mother didn't bear me modest, nor twins; so, following her maternal example, I never give birth to a principle by hemispheres.

MONROE

[Holding one foot and twingeing.]

Well and good, Mr. Paine, but hadn't we better confine our universal dreams to gypsy camps—considering our style of bed tonight?

PAINE

[Humming the words.]

'O, what care I for a goose-feather bed
With the sheet turned down—'

[Breaking off with a short laugh.]

Ha! "Raggle-taggle": that's the tune of Revolution, Sir.

MONROE

[Wearily.]

Oh, I don't know! There's times I almost think we deserve goose-feathers—and tar, too—for such loyalty as ours.

PAINE

[Sharply.]

What's that! Is that your ripe judgment of our cause?

MONROE

No, Sir, not ripe—just rotten. I'm dog-tired—tired of failure. The game's up! We know our dreams—but look at the facts.

PAINE

Well—what facts?

MONROE

Listen!

[He pauses a moment.]

You hear that sound?

[They both listen in silence.

*Shadowy in the background, the form of
WASHINGTON re-passes and disappears.]*

PAINE

You mean the river there—the ice rattling?

MONROE

Yes: the death-rattle of our rebellion. I mean, that Delaware river can tell our story. That's us—the American army. Last summer, what were we? The warm, quick stream of our country's passion, welling like hot blood, pouring out of the hills—the turbulent current of a continent. And now, in December,—what now, ha? That's us—out there: a death-cold stream, congealing while we move: a current choked up with the ice of its own broken heart—any hour to be buried under, gone, stone-cold as this river bank tonight.

PAINE

[Humming, as he fondles his musket.]

'For tonight I shall sleep in a cold open field'—

[Speaking.]

And those facts, Lieutenant? Skip the metaphors.

MONROE

Facts, Sir? The facts are disaster and retreat. At Brooklyn Heights—failure, retreat; New York—the same; Fort Washington, Fort Lee—lost, both; the Hudson—lost; and here now for months in Jersey—ignominious retreat: deserters, dropping off like rats from a wreck: militia without honour; officers without obedience; a Congress that votes battalions, but no money—and this nearly two years since Bunker Hill! So here, Mr. Paine, this Christmas night, while the Hessian hirelings are rum-drinking over the river there in Trenton—these are the *facts*: To expel from America His Majesty's twenty-five thousand regulars, stuffed with plum pudding—here we are: twenty-four hundred retreating frozen-bellied gypsies!

PAINE

[*Quickly*]

And one general.

MONROE

[*Rising slowly, speaks with quiet emotion.*]

Aye, Sir—one general. After all, for us, I guess that's the *only* fact. For, if needs be, we'll follow that one the gypsy path to hell.

PAINE

[*With a gesture of silence, points to the background.*]

Shh!

[Silently, once more, in dim silhouette, the form of WASHINGTON paces past and is gone. For a moment, they stand watching, motionless. Then MONROE speaks, under his breath.]

MONROE

Him?—Is this camp-fire *his*?

PAINE

[Nodding.]

I'm his sentinel here.

MONROE

I bear a dispatch to him.

PAINE

Not now: not for half an hour. That's my orders. He's thinking. He thinks—alone.

MONROE

And walks like that?

PAINE

Sometimes. Sometimes he just stands—like a tree—
—all night.

MONROE

What, and sleeps—standing?

PAINE

Not sleeps, I guess; though often his eyes are closed.

He calls it,—taking his cat-naps. And sometimes he takes 'em walking.

MONROE

Walking!

PAINE

Like we saw—there

MONROE

[Taking out a folded paper.]

But this dispatch, Mr. Paine?

PAINE

Follow me, Sir: I'll take you to Colonel Hamilton. Since the General met him in New York, he's made a son of him.—He's over yonder, with General Knox.

MONROE

[Taking Paine's hand in the dim light, follows him, limping.]

Some future Christmas, Mr. Paine, we must resume our fireside conversation on the doctrine of hemispheres.

PAINE

Hemispheres?—No, Sir: give me—globes!

[They disappear in the darkness.

After a moment—pacing past again in the background—the huge form of WASHINGTON

pauses, comes slowly down half way to the fire and stands there.

In long military cloak, three-cornered hat, and great boots, his hands still clutched behind him—his posture is erect as an Indian.

Around his throat is a piece of woollen cloth.

His eyes are intently fixed, his lips compressed with painful tightness.

He remains perfectly motionless.

Vaguely the sounds of wind and river-ice deepen the silence of their pausings.

Soon, from the right, very quietly, the slight small form of a young Man comes into the gleam of the fire. He is in uniform, shabby but borne with alert distinction. He passes over to the fire and waits there.

As he crosses the gaze of WASHINGTON, the eyes of the latter follow him and continue to look at him for a moment, before he speaks in a tone hoarse with cold.]

WASHINGTON

Ah! Hamilton—you?

HAMILTON

Yes, your Excellency.

WASHINGTON

Are the boats secured?

HAMILTON

Yes, your Excellency.

WASHINGTON

All?

HAMILTON

Yes, Sir.

WASHINGTON

[Murmurs.]

Ah!

*[Slowly, he begins to pace again.**HAMILTON waits, near the fire.**Soon WASHINGTON speaks again, abrupt.]*

Oh! Alexander!

HAMILTON

What, Sir?

WASHINGTON

You dispatched my letter to Mt. Vernon?

HAMILTON

To Lady Washington: Yes, Sir.

WASHINGTON

[Murmuring low, as he paces.]

You're a good boy—you're a good boy—

*[After a moment, pausing again, he speaks
with staccato sharpness.]*

Well?—Well? Your report!

HAMILTON

This message, by Lieutenant Monroe, from General Gates at Bristol. Shall I read it, Sir?

WASHINGTON

No: give me the gist.

HAMILTON

General Gates has received your orders. He understands it is your plan to strike the Hessians tonight at Trenton, with five co-operating divisions, commanded severally by yourself, himself, Generals Ewing, Putnam and Griffin. Accordingly, he has dispatched General Cadwalader to the river.

WASHINGTON

Well?

HAMILTON

General Cadwalader has looked at the river.

WASHINGTON

Has he!—Well?

HAMILTON

He considers the floating ice impassable—

WASHINGTON

Considers!—

HAMILTON

The chances desperate, and he is gone back to Bristol.

WASHINGTON

Gone back to *Brimstone!* Let him sit there and broil his rump!—What else?

HAMILTON

Another message from General Gates, by Captain Wilkinson.

WASHINGTON

We are twice favoured.—Well?

HAMILTON

General Gates himself has set out for Philadelphia to inform Congress—

WASHINGTON

Inform Congress—what of?

HAMILTON

That he disapproves your plan and cannot co-operate.

WASHINGTON

Ah!

[*After a pause.*]

What further messages?

HAMILTON

From General Putnam, at Philadelphia.

WASHINGTON

[*Quickly.*]

What's Put say?

HAMILTON

He regrets his division cannot march tonight.

WASHINGTON

[*Slowly.*]

Old Put says that.—Well! —Next?

HAMILTON

General Ewing regrets the ice, but will try whatever seems most practical—in the morning.

WASHINGTON

Try! He'd better try lard, and fry in his own fat!
That's practical for corn pone—ha!—in the *morning!*

[WASHINGTON'S *features contract, and he gnaws fiercely the edge of his hand, before speaking again.*]

So: that makes three divisions time-stalled—useless.

[*He glances slowly at HAMILTON.*]

And the fourth—?

HAMILTON

General Griffin sends word—

[*He pauses.*]

WASHINGTON

What are *his* regrets?

HAMILTON

He regrets his necessity to abandon New Jersey altogether.

WASHINGTON

[Lifting off his hat, raises it high aloft.]

Jehovah, God of chariots! And *this* is the thunder of Thy captains!

[Dashing his hat to the ground, he grinds his boot upon it.]

Blithering skulkgudgeons! *These* are my fighting generals!

[An immense shudder wrenches his body.

Controlling a sharp spasm, his face grows marble. Stooping, he takes up the crumpled hat and holds it in silence; then, slowly turning his look from the hat to HAMILTON's face, he speaks with tense quiet.]

Alexander: not a word of this! You understand?

HAMILTON

Not a word, your Excellency.

WASHINGTON

Your report Sir, is satisfactory. At midnight, our division will cross the Delaware—alone.

HAMILTON

[With quiet emotion.]

Nay, Sir: not alone.

WASHINGTON

I said—ours alone. What other forces are left to attend us?

HAMILTON

The Ages, your Excellency: the forces that prevail over river barriers: there, Sir, still flows—the Rubicon.

WASHINGTON

[Hoarsely.]

Nay, my boy—not so classic. The Delaware will do, for tonight. 'Tis no Cæsar stands in my boots.

[With smouldering fire, that dartles, flames and then bursts.]

But 'tis Cæsar, I reckon, who camps over there with his legions: a Cæsar, hog-latin from Hanover, who would make the Atlantic his channel—who hires his own German breed to help suppress English freedom in both England and America, making his chancellors his apes and his commoners his minions. I'd rather you called me Hannibal-in-a-cocked-hat than such a Hessian Roman!

HAMILTON

[With flitting smile.]

I am well corrected, Sir. I cannot gainsay—the cocked hat.

[With swift ardour, going near to him.]

But oh, my dear General, I want you only to know my utter conviction of this night!

26 *GEORGE WASHINGTON*

WASHINGTON

[Looking at him—slowly.]

Your conviction, son?

HAMILTON

This night is the beginning of the world.—Darkness was over the face of the deep, and He said, "Let there be light!"

WASHINGTON

[Murmurs.]

And there was light.

HAMILTON

And there was light!

WASHINGTON

Without form and void—and after that—light and order.

HAMILTON

Order—and organic structure: a new world—a new-built unity—a new self-government above warring tribes—a commonwealth above kings—and its name, *America!*

WASHINGTON

You are young—and you have seen it.

HAMILTON

[Ardently.]

I see it, Sir!

I am getting old—but I too have seen it—darkly. Old eyes and young must work together, boy. Will finds its way.

HAMILTON

And the will is here.

WASHINGTON

Ah?—Where?

HAMILTON

[With a reverent smile.]

Under that crumpled hat, Sir.

WASHINGTON

[Smiling back faintly—speaks, after a pause.]

The boats are ready?

HAMILTON

On the face of the deep.

WASHINGTON

Over there—no crossing back. Over there—are the looted homes of freemen, and the Hessian looters—keeping the birth of Christ, there. Over that water, my boy, is our final stake: 'tis fight to a finish.

HAMILTON

And fight—for the beginning: our commonwealth above kings!

WASHINGTON

In the beginning—there was a word spoken—a watchword—and the stars held their watch ever after.

[From the distance, on the right, a single faint bugle-note is heard.]

HAMILTON

O Sir, yes! Our watchword: the men are waiting for it.

WASHINGTON

[Mutters, looking off.]

No stars yet tonight!

HAMILTON

[With fervour.]

You will give it, Sir—you alone. I'll go tell them. I beg of you, Sir,—the watchword!

WASHINGTON

[Continues muttering to himself.]

Above warring tribes. Out of the void—a form. And there was light of stars—and order. Void, and then—victory!

HAMILTON

Sir,—The watchword.

WASHINGTON

[*To HAMILTON, very quietly.*]

Victory, or death.

HAMILTON

[*Murmuring low.*]

Victory or death.

[*Then, swiftly in silence going toward the dimness, right, he speaks in vibrant tone:*]

Victory or death!

[*As he disappears, the Voice of TOM PAINE answers from farther off: "Victory or death!"*

Still farther, then, in the distance, other Voices call faintly to each other: "Victory or death!"

These Voices are still continuing, when once more a far bugle is heard.

WASHINGTON *stirs slightly, clutching his hands before him.*

Now the bugle is answered by another, and WASHINGTON tightens the great joints of his hands, and breathes heavily.

And now, through the dark, increasingly, the upblowing notes of bugles rise, like irises of sound. And as they rise, the grey of gust-blurred moonlight in the background clears to a pallid blue, which deepens and—filling swiftly with stars—takes on a glowing intensity of azure.

*And now the bugles—as many as the stars—
magnify their blaring notes to a martial revelry
of music, crashing the dark with their silver and
brazen peals.*

*Staring upward in the midst of this sound and
the colour behind him, WASHINGTON in the fore-
ground, raises his arms in a gesture immense and
terrible—his voice breaking with sharp joy, as he
cries hoarsely aloud:]*

WASHINGTON

Victory! Lord God of battles—victory!

Curtain

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

I.—NOTE ON PRODUCTION

By Walter Hampden

Necessarily these hints are merely of the slightest, in the hope that each group presenting this episode will contain some one person of the requisite imagination and skill to develop and supplement them. This consideration leads at once to the all important one of direction. Choose, by all means, a stage director, either from your own group, or an amateur or professional coach in whose judgment you can place confidence. He it is who will have to sense the effect of the whole: to unify the lighting, the scene, the atmosphere, the mood of the acting, into one complete harmony.

The first suggestion to him is to read the text without analysis and try to catch his early strong impressions. Let him hold these and not depart from them. They will form the base of his work. With some thought and quiet meditation they will flower into the essentials which will stimulate his imagination to the discovery of all the organic details.

Casting the parts is also important. Do not be too realistically historical. Appearance for the rôle is a secondary consideration. If it happens to go along with things of more importance, power to project personality and the illusion of character, so much the better. Departures from age, stature, looks and voice are not of primary consequence. If there be an exception it is, of course, in regard to the actor of Washington. Washington is so much a part of the visual memory of the people of this country that it is wise to favor physical suitability in this instance. The main elements to base a choice upon are audibility of voice, distinctness of enunciation, vitality and responsiveness of temperament, and that personal quality that spells character, by which I mean that sympathetic capacity to feel it and exhibit it.

Think of contrasts of type for Paine and Monroe; the latter, moody, low-toned; Paine, keen-eyed, with an incisive utterance, and intellectual enthusiasm. Hamilton must impart a distinct sense of confident youth, so as to offset the heroic and mature Washington. Quilloquon may be almost anything that is racy of the soil, provided he be mellow and colorful. He should typify generations of retrospect and have a spring in his step and an alertness of glance that suggest his relation to ages yet to come. Though he has music to sing, remember his rendition should not be operatic, but instinct with character. Let him keep to the time, yet half speak the song. Any clever boy and girl, not prettified, can pantomime sufficiently for the two children. They, too, should sing with naturalness and simplicity.

It would be idle to indicate stage mechanics—they are so adaptable to conditions of place and person. The dialogue is supplemented with numerous directions explanatory of the author's intention, and Mr. Jones' design for the scene is replete with suggestion.

Viewing this Action as a whole, it stands, coldly lighted and deeply shaded, enwrapped by the solemn bracing atmosphere of the Declaration of Independence. Quilloquon's ballad sets in fanciful way, with its wistful gaiety and plaintive charm, the serious mood of the Action to follow. This Action again, before Hamilton's entrance, has a lighter quality than after, so let Monroe not be ponderous in his depression and let him and Paine keep this early part of the scene cheery with the "gameness" of an invincible optimism. Emphasize, however, those details of business which indicate cold and physical suffering. The passage where they note Washington as he passes to and fro in the background must not be heavy in tone, but rather weighted by pauses, otherwise their play will detract from the force of Washington's method in the latter part of the scene.

For the actor of Washington, I would merely suggest that he do as little as possible. Repose will give him strength and a reduction of facial play and gesture to a minimum will aid to render him heroic—and a hero in the fullest sense he must be without theatrical strut or pose.

A final word for Mr. Director: Don't try to fix your methods of expression upon your actors, for they won't fit. Imprint your conception on their minds, inspire them with your enthusiasm, hold them together by authority of understanding rather than by discipline. Foster the growth of your ideas in them and their own as well, and eliminate as much detail as possible. There is always the one expressive detail which implies all the rest. Seek it.

II.—NOTE ON COSTUMES AND LIGHTING

By Robert Edmond Jones

Use a white floor-cloth. In the illustration bare trees are suggested by strips of cloth dyed dark grey and hanging in vertical folds from above the line of sight. They are touched with white where they meet the floor. Behind them the floor-cloth is draped over a flat board cut in the silhouette of a low hill; behind this again is a straight blue curtain or cyclorama.

Paine, Monroe, Washington and Hamilton wear regimentals of buff and blue, stained and ragged, and three-cornered hats. Washington also wears a military cloak and great boots.

The lighting of the scene is the most important element of the production. For this scene there are two kinds of light contrasted with each other: firelight and cold blue moonlight. The fire is suggested in this way: Half-burned logs of wood heaped together so as to conceal electric bulbs dipped in yellow, red and blue, rightly proportioned. *No footlights*; no borderlights in the foreground; hidden spotlights of dim cold blue shining obliquely down on the white floor-cloth. Rear borderlights in blue and a strip of blue lights concealed behind the hill to shine on the sky curtain. These last must be arranged on "dimmers" or otherwise to grow gradually brighter and brighter at the end of the scene. The sky-cloth is perforated with tiny holes; behind each perforation is an electric "star." The stars are used, of course, only at the end of the scene. Or the stars may be more simply rendered by small, three-pointed pieces of tinsel pinned to the curtain, unseen until the moment of illumination.

Necessarily these notes are merely hints. All will depend on who makes use of them. They are meant as suggestions to local producers of imagination, who will use or discard them according to their own discretion.

III.—NOTE ON INTERPRETATION

By Percy MacKaye

Concerning the production of this Dramatic Action by amateurs, I would add only these brief comments (on certain details of interpretation) to those of Mr. Hampden and Mr. Jones.

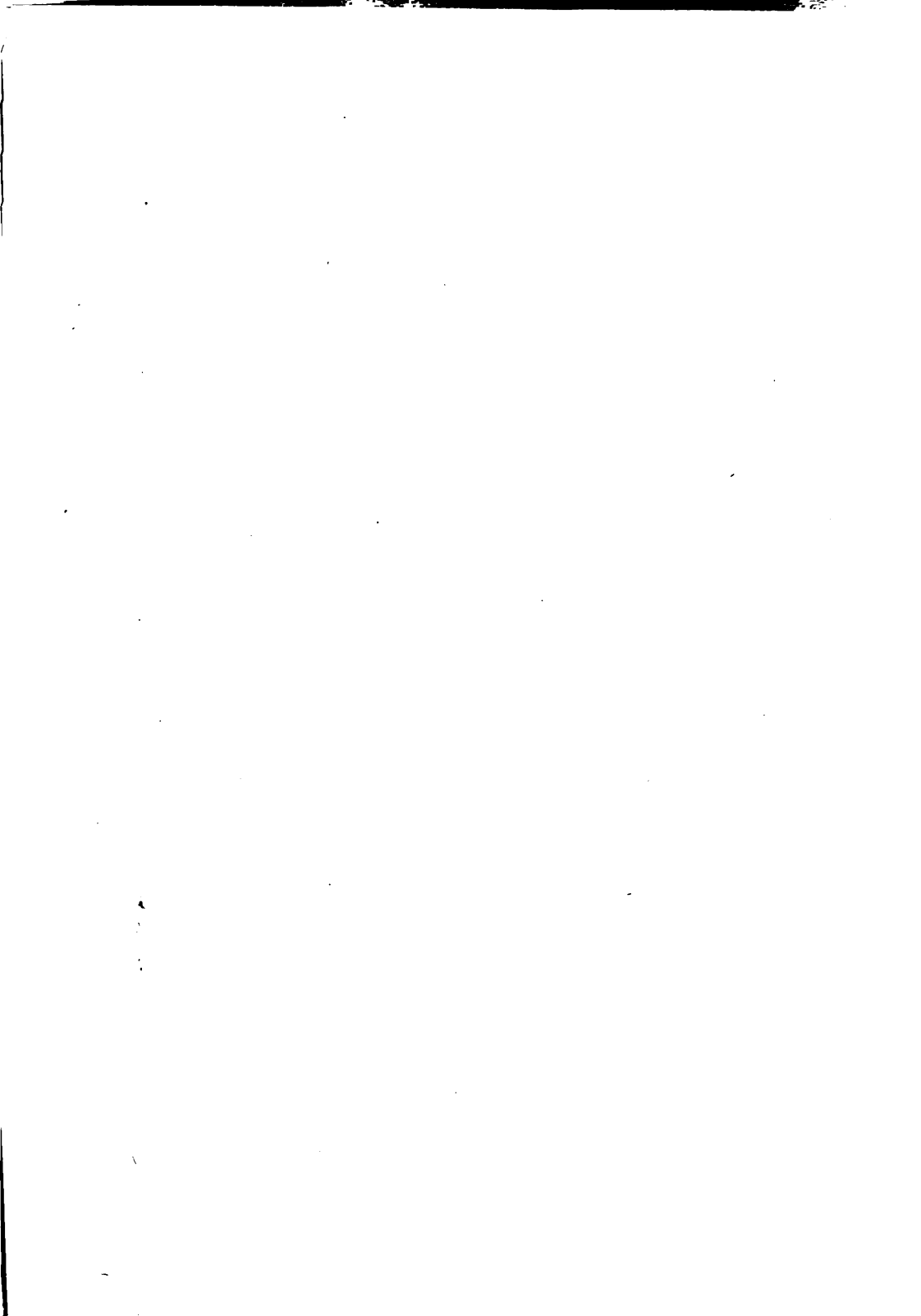
The bell and the chimes in the beginning should be mellow in tone, and should be carefully rehearsed so as to be a subordinate undertone to the chanting of the Declaration, itself an effect which should be rendered under direction of one whose ear is sensitive to the right cadencing and rhythm of chanted poetry.

Quilloquon, as the Town Crier, while differentiating his acting and voice from those of the singing Ballad Singer (his second appearance) yet remains always the balladist, and should render his clear-spoken quotation from the Declaration with the rhythmic—but not metrical—utterance of spoken poetry.

For "the Raggle-Taggle Gypsies" Quilloquon is dressed in old-time home-spun eighteenth-century garb, weather worn with a touch of gypsy color; the children in simple smocks, also weather worn, bare-footed, their hair not curled but very simply natural.

In the final blare of bugles sounding outside, the volume of sound should never be so loud as to suggest realism, the climax of the crescendo must be reached before Washington speaks in the instant of silence immediately following it, so as not to drown or blur the articulation of the actor of Washington, in his hoarse cry of "Victory! Lord God of battles, victory!" In this respect, do not let the words "crashing the dark," in the printed stage directions on page 30, mislead the stage director to create an actual roaring loudness of sound: the stage directions do not intend a realism of noise; they intend to suggest a rising crescendo of music always far-sounding as in a dream, and never obtrusively loud.

Of course—and especially for performances by amateurs—it goes without saying that this final vision and music of the Action cannot be rightly achieved without expert equipment in lighting apparatus and lighting directorship, as well as patient rehearsal. Without such expert equipment and rehearsal, the visionary portion of the *finale* would better be omitted altogether, rather than risk a mawkish or tawdry light-effect which would negate or cheapen the acting and the emotion of the scene. In case the visionary part be omitted, then the final effect must depend on appeal more to the ear than to the eye, rendered by means of the right cadencing and interval-spacing of the off-stage voices, in their murmured *diminuendo* of "Victory or death," the last repetition of which (in any case) is the cue for the final speech of Washington.



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